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LETTER DATED 1 OCTOBER 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 1 October 1999 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, concerning the arbitrary and aggressive United States practices being carried out against civilian vessels transporting humanitarian goods to Iraq (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 1 October 1999 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I draw your attention to the following arbitrary and aggressive United States practices:

1. On 28 August 1999, United States naval forces cruising in the Arabian Gulf intercepted the Chinese freighter Da Hua and led it to a point situated near Iraqi territorial waters to inspect its cargo - a generator equipped with a winching system, for which a contract had been duly signed under the memorandum of understanding (oil-for-food programme). After the inspection, the vessel was prevented from continuing towards the port of Umm Qasr to unload its cargo, on the pretext that the United States naval forces had not been able to inspect the cargo because the winching system attached to the generator was stored in the hold of the ship. The vessel then sailed away from the area of inspection towards the port of Dubai, where it dropped anchor on 2 September 1999 and unloaded its winching system onto a towing vessel in the Arabian Gulf.

Near Iraqi territorial waters, the United States naval forces again intercepted the vessel for inspection and again prevented it from approaching Iraqi ports on the pretext that its cargo was not being carried in a way that would allow the United States Navy to carry out an inspection in the ship's hold. The crew was thus forced to rearrange the cargo before another inspection could take place and the vessel could be permitted to continue on its way. The vessel arrived at the port of Umm Qasr on 10 September 1999 and began to unload its cargo the same day; it sailed from Umm Qasr on 15 September 1999, after unloading all of its cargo.

2. On 18 September 1999, as it was approaching Iraqi territorial waters, the Danish vessel Arktis Crystal was intercepted by United States naval forces, which led it to a certain inspection point. This freighter's cargo consisted of 3,000 tons of beans exported from the Philippines on behalf of a food producer, under the memorandum of understanding (oil-for-food programme). While United States naval forces inspected the cargo, the captain was informed that the vessel was not authorized to enter an Iraqi port because some bags of goods had fallen on the air vents, blocking them and thereby impeding the search. It should be noted that all the documents concerning the cargo were perfectly in order.

The captain of the ship contacted the headquarters of the United States naval forces in Bahrain to obtain authorization to proceed. He also notified the shipowners of the events and requested United States maritime agencies to help him. They replied that they were unable to do so. The shipowners are currently trying to move the ship to another port to repair the damaged air vents so as to facilitate the inspection.

These activities of United States forces cruising in the Arabian Gulf have become a cause for extreme concern, in that they are intended to prevent or

delay the shipment of humanitarian goods to Iraq on vain pretexts, flagrantly contravening the rules of civilian navigation in the Arabian Gulf.

While strongly condemning this senseless use of force by the United States to prevent the shipment of humanitarian goods to Iraq, the Iraqi Government requests you, as the guarantor of the memorandum of understanding, to intervene with the aim of putting a stop to these inhumane, illegal and immoral United States practices.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs